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21 DECEMBER 1955

BRITISH MOVES IN MIDDLE EAST

I. British assuming more robust position in defense their widespread interests in Middle East.

A. Foreign Secretary Macmillan returned from Baghdad Pact meetings (late Nov) apparently convinced that vigorous new moves were needed in area, both to bolster Iraq, and to counter Egyptian-Saudi influence.

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B.

Gen. Templer, (Chief, Imperial General Staff), together with head of Levant Dept, For Off, arrived Jordan 6 Dec,

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C.

anti-Pact

rioting broke out 15 Dec among Palestine refugees, spread over whole country within three days (see map).

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1. Propaganda broadcasts and faked news reports from other Arab states (notably Egypt) fanned flames.
2. Cairo radio called Templer's mission "Zionist-imperialist plot," and declared "people of Jordan have finally defeated the Butcher of Malaya."
3. Jordan's British-led Arab Legion was barely able to keep order: many casualties and arrests.

D. Basic "why" of riots is sentiment, especially strong among half million Palestine refugees. ~~that Baghdad Pact is Western~~

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-2-

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(vice to turn Arab attention away from number one obsession, "Israeli threat.")

1. This feeling is compound of two elements: general hostility to British "imperialism" and specific belief that Israel is creation of US and UK.

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2. While Egyptian agents [REDACTED] certainly helped rioting along--and possibly instigated demonstrations in a few cases--Jordanian leftists, students looking for thrills, and other malcontent elements are entirely capable of making trouble on their own.

E. [REDACTED]

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1. Dissolution of parliament automatically dumped premier Majali: caretaker cabinet under "elder statesman" [REDACTED] (close to royal family) will run gov't until elections.

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III.



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A. One focus of dispute is oasis area claimed both by Saudis and UK-backed local rulers. After three years of fruitless negotiation, British announced that forces of Sultan Muscat and Oman and also Shiek of Abu Dhabi had occupied Buraimi on 26 Oct.

B. Now, Sultan Muscat and Oman also receiving British support in moves against dissident feudatory, imam of Inner Oman.

1. Sultan, whose control over imam in past was at best nominal, now anxious to bolster his authority in entire kingdom

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Imam logical first target, since  
he--with Saudi support--has made  
claim of independence.

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IV. Basic motivation for UK actions in Arabia  
is that British feel compelled to protect  
their Persian Gulf dependencies--and oil--

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V. Little chance either British or Saudis will moderate their stands.

A. In view overall UK fuel situation, British believe it essential keep control oil supplies.

D. Saudis also fear "encirclement" by British, who influence Iraq, Jordan, and now trying to close off south.